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In the last decade an unprecedented number of college-level foreign students have appeared in the United States, competing with native speakers in schools where the only medium of instruction is English. All students at American universities have to do three kinds of sophisticated writing--summarizing in notes, writing exam essays, and writing term papers. The skill of writing, perhaps the most important on the university level, is the one in which foreign students show the least competence or training. It seems erroneous to expect these students to learn to write by learning to produce grammatically correct sentences when native speakers don't seem to learn that way. For the native speaker to become a native writer, he must begin with reading rather than with listening. Data on the differences between spoken and written English, most discernable on the level of discourse, are essential for adequate materials for teaching writing. In the "discover and transform" method of teaching writing described in this paper, the students first read and compare two written models similar in content but different in form. They then analyze the models so they can understand what grammatical and semantic rules operate to transform the first model into the second. Illustrations are from the author's forthcoming "Read, Understand, Write," Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Spring 1970. (AMM)

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"Discover and Transform: A Method of Teaching Writing to Foreign Students"

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Linguistically-oriented materials for teaching writing are of relatively recent interest to ESL teachers. The linguistic method was originally developed primarily for the purpose of teaching oral English to students interested in learning to converse in the language. Those students interested in the written language have for the most part continued to learn it via the translation method, going through Theodore Dreiser or Joseph Conrad, dictionaries in hand. Until very recently, then, non-native students of English have learned to speak the language or to read it, but seldom to write it.

Most likely, writing has been the least learned linguistic skill simply because it has evinced the least interest; because it has seemed the least relevant to the needs or desires of ESL students. But times have changed: an unprecedented number of college-level foreign students has appeared on the scene in the last decade; students who have come to the U.S. to work on a degree, competing with native speakers in schools where the only medium of instruction is English. Formerly, students like these were left on their own--to sink or swim. But now that we have them in such large numbers, we can no longer ignore them. We must teach them what they need to know how to do in order to get through their course work at English-speaking schools.

And writing is one of the most important things to know how to do in college. At one time or other, all students at American universities have to do three kinds of quite sophisticated writing. They have to summarize--to take notes on lectures or readings to be used later for research or review. They have to write essays--to answer exam questions

requiring that they explain something they have read and perhaps summarized. And they have to write term papers--to report on research requiring that they not only summarize and explain, but perhaps argue as well. Thus, skill in written English is necessary for students who wish to do work in American schools.

Before foreign students are admitted to most U.S. college universities, they must take a proficiency exam to show that they have a certain minimum amount of skill in English: that they can understand and speak it to some extent, that they can read it with some comprehension, and that they can do some writing in it. Understandably, but sadly, it is the skill of writing--the one perhaps most important to know how to do on the university level--that foreign students show the least competence in; the one in which their performance is often the lowest.

Interestingly enough even native speakers often perform poorly in writing. Although they can speak grammatically correct sentences, they often cannot write them, much less combine several of them into a coherent unit. It seems that competence in the spoken language has little to do with competence in the written one: everyone who is a native speaker is not necessarily a "native writer" at the same time.

Obviously, then, writing is a linguistic skill badly in need of teaching. If native speakers often have to learn how to write, then certainly foreign students must; and for this reason ESL institutions all over the country are putting much more emphasis than before on teaching writing. But linguistically-oriented materials designed to do this are few and far between. Those which have been published in the last few years look for the most part much like the old materials intended to teach oral English. All of them use a grammatical approach of some kind,

either requiring that the students make substitutions or expansions, that they use certain sentence patterns, or that they copy a given composition using a different lexicon.

A grammatical approach to the teaching of writing assumes, of course, that competence in grammar and competence in writing are the same thing; that learning to control grammar is the key to learning to write. But native speakers control the grammar of their language. They can understand and speak grammatically complex sentences. Yet, as was said before, they sometimes cannot write them, and very often cannot produce a coherent summary, essay, or term paper. It therefore seems that we are on the wrong track in expecting foreign students to learn to write by learning to produce grammatically correct sentences when native speakers don't seem to learn it that way.

One way of getting on the right track is to examine the way native speakers <u>do</u> learn to write; and I'm convinced that they learn this in a way analogous to the way they first learn grammar. In learning grammar, the young child first recognizes--hears--the difference between, say, verb forms like WALK and WALKED. Next, as he continues to hear sentences like I CAN WALK THERE or BILLY WALKED TO SCHOOL YESTERDAY, he comes to understand what grammatical and semantic rules operate in order to transform WALK into WALKED: first, that the phoneme /t/ is added to the verb (a grammatical rule), and second, that this often occurs when the meaning of the verb is "past" (a semantic rule). Thus he internalizes transformation rules which he has for the most part discovered for himself, and this internalization, this competence, is demonstrated by his performance--by his use of the correct verb forms in the appropriate situations. This learning process can be summed up by the expression "discover and transform

This same discover and transform process must also occur in order for the native speaker to become a native writer. However, instead of dealing with the spoken language, he must deal with the written one; he must begin with reading rather than with listening. Not surprisingly, those native speakers who have done the most reading are invariably the best writers. It seems odd that, while applied linguists regard as a truism the idea that listening must precede speaking in learning spoken English, they often seem not to see the same intimate connection between reading and writing. But obviously students have to know what writing is before they can be expected to produce it, and thus reading must play as important a role in a writing course as listening does in an oral production one.

Perhaps, though, the problem isn't so much that linguists have ignored this connection between reading and writing as it is that they aren't quite sure what to do about it. Although they recognize that spoken and written English are different in some ways, they haven't yet come up with a description of these differences. They haven't yet stated the rules that a potential writer will discover from reading English which he probably won't discover from hearing it. And it is impossible to come up with adequate materials for teaching writing without such data.

It is not the purpose of this article to describe the rules which apply to written and not to spoken English, but I will make one generalization, based on my own research, about the differences between the two forms of the language: these differences--both grammatical and semantic--are most important and most discernible, not on the level of the sentence, but on the level of the discourse.

I think that we often lose sight of the fact that students of oral English learn sentences in context; that their fluency depends not so much on their ability to produce correct verb forms as on their ability to respond appropriately within the framework of a discourse, or conversation. They are not considered competent speakers unless they can do this. And the same is true of writing. Competence in it is evidenced by the writer's ability to produce sentences in context.

My research indicates that, in spoken English, contextual "errors"--i.e., irrelevancies or incoherencies--occur frequently, but these errors do not seriously impair communication. In written English, however, such errors are much less common, and when they do occur communication almost inevitably breaks down. This would stand to reason, of course, for the situations in which the two forms of the language happen are entirely different. A speaking situation is immediate and reciprocal, allowing the speaker feedback and the opportunity to correct himself. A writing situation, on the other hand, is non-immediate and non-reciprocal; thus, the writer can get no feedback and has no chance to correct himself. While errors in context, then (irrelevancies or incoherencies) are permissible in spoken English, they are much less so in written, and it is these errors, rather than errors in verbs or other sentence-level forms, which indicate that competence in the written language does not automatically follow from competence in the spoken one.

Thus, teaching writing does not consist primarily of getting students to use grammatically correct sentences; much less of getting them to make legible squiggles on paper, to spell correctly, or to use big words. Rather, teaching writing consists primarily of getting students to compose; of getting them to put grammatical sentences together in such a way that they form a coherent unit--a written discourse. And before we can teach

them to do this, we must first teach them to read--not sentences, but compositions--so that they can see for themselves how sentences are put together and how they form a coherent unit; so that they can see for themselves how to compose.

Just as native speakers learn their language via the discover and transform process I mentioned before in which competence precedes performance--in which they first learn to recognize and to understand differences between sentences, and then to produce these different sentences in the appropriate context--so too foreign students can learn to write via the same process. We can teach them to discover the rules of written English so that they can transform a string of grammatical sentences into a coherent discourse.

I have written a text based on this precept. Briefly, the discover and transform method works as follows: the students first read and compare two written models similar in content but different in form. In this way they learn to recognize differences. Next, aided by a set of questions, they analyze the two models they have just read so that they can understand these differences; so that they can understand what grammatical and semantic rules operate to transform the first model into the second. This process, first of recognition and then of understanding, comprises the "discover" part of each lesson, and is designed to develop competence. Next comes the "transform" part of the lesson, in which the student is expected to demonstrate his competence by his performance--by using his newly-discovered transform rules on a written model.

The sample lessons at the end of this article give a more specific picture of this process. Lesson 3 demonstrates how the spoken language

can be utilized in the beginning stages to help the students discover some of the rules involved in changing spoken English into the written form called "indirect address." Lesson 10 illustrates how students can be taught to use discourse-level grammar and semantics to create a coherent unit out of adjoining sentences. It also illustrates how the lessons in the text build from preceding ones.

Subsequent lessons show students how to deal with ever larger written contexts, teaching them how to relate non-adjoining sentences (which may be different paragraphs) to one another by means of connectors, parallelism or other discourse-level grammatical or semantic devices. The last lesson in the text teaches them to summarize--to write about a composition including only its important points. I have planned two other texts which will teach students to write essays and papers via the same method.

The lessons in this text, then, focus on just a few rules at a time, and in a sequence which leads the students from a written form close to speech to a form far removed from it. The students learn how to discover rules (through first recognizing differences and then understanding them) and how to make transformations (through using what they have discovered in their own writing). Thus, they begin with a corpus of grammatical sentences, and end up with a coherent written discourse--a composition.

Sample Lessons:[1]

LESSON 3. How to write about a conversation in indirect address form: contractions; verb changes; pronoun changes; etc.

READ: Find the differences between the two models below.

Conversation:

John: I've heard San Francisco is a beautiful city. Bob went there on his vacation
Don: I didn't know that. I've been thinking he'd gone to Los Angeles. I'd have liked to have heard about San Francisco. I'm planning to go there on my vacation.
John: He might've visited both cities. He'll be arriving in a few minutes. You can ask him then.

Indirect address:

John mentioned that he had heard San Francisco was a beautiful city. Bob had gone there on his vacation.

Don replied that he hadn't known that. He had been thinking Bob had gone to Los Angeles He would have liked to have heard about San Francisco. He was planning to go there on his vacation.

John said that Bob might have visited both cities. He would be arriving in a few minutes. Don could ask him then.

ANALYZE: read the section below. Then answer the questions.

One way of writing about a conversation, as we have seen, is to use direct address form, in which you enclose the exact words of the speakers in quotation marks. Another way of writing about a conversation is to use indirect address form. In this form you do not use the speakers' exact words, and thus you do not use quotation marks. There are many differences between a direct address and an indirect address; this lesson illustrates just a few of these differences, and some of the changes you must make when writing about a converation in indirect address form. You will learn about other differences and other changes in future lessons.

1. Contractions are shortened forms of words. In the model conversation, I'VE is the shortened form of I HAVE. Make a list of the other contractions which occur in the model conversation. Then, next to each of these, write the long (unshortened) form.
2. Contractions occur quite often in speech, but only one type of contraction occurs very often in writing. In the model indirect address, only one contraction occurs. What is it? What is the long form for this contraction? In writing an indirect address, then, what is the one word which is most often written in contracted (shortened) form?
3. A verb may be one word: TAKE, or more than one word: WAS TAKING, COULD HAVE TAKEN, HAD BEEN TAKING, MIGHT HAVE BEEN TAKING, etc.

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Make a list of all the verbs in the model conversation. Next to this list make a list of the verbs in the model indirect address. Which verbs are changed? Which ones are the same? Can you think of a reason for this?

4. The following verbs might occur in a conversation. Copy them in a list. Then, next to each of these, write the verb which would occur in an indirect address. (Some will be different and some will remain the same.) ARE, MUST HAVE SHOWN, DID DO, OUGHT (TO), DO SEE, MAY BE, SHOULD HAVE RUN, TO BE, THINKS, DID, KNEW, DID FEEL, HAD, HAS BEEN SAYING, CAN('T) HAVE STUDIED, HAD TAKEN, AM WAITING.
5. Pronouns are words like I, YOUR, THEM, ME, HIS, US, YOURSELF, HE, THEIR, OURSELVES, etc. Make a list of the pronouns you found in the conversation. Next to each of these, write the word which occurs in the direct address. "First person" pronouns are words like I, MY, WE, OURS; "second person" pronouns: YOU, YOURS, YOUR; "third person": HIM, THEY, HE, THEIRS. Which of these three kinds of pronouns does <u>not</u> change in an indirect address? Can you think of a reason for this?
6. YOU in a conversation may be changed to either HE or to THEY in an indirect address. When should you change YOU to THEY?
7. Copy the following pronouns in a list. Then, next to each of them, write the form which would occur in an indirect address. YOURS, WE, MINE, MY, US, YOU, YOURSELF, OURSELVES, ME, MYSELF, YOUR.
8. Which three pronouns in the model conversation are changed into nouns (names) in the indirect address? Can you think of a reason for this?
9. Where does speaker identification occur in the model indirect address?
10. What word occurs after speaker identification in an indirect address but not in a direct address?

WRITE: change the model conversation below into indirect address. Make all of the necessary changes in contractions, verbs, and pronouns. Use nouns instead of pronouns where you think it is necessary.

John: I have to leave soon. I already told Bob that you've been planning to go to San Francisco. If I see him I'll tell him you're looking for him.

Don: That'd be good. I don't know much about San Francisco. But I wanted to go there because I've seen so many beautiful pictures of it. And an old friend on mine lives there. I'm sure I can stay with him if I do go.

LESSON 10: FOR, BECAUSE, and SINCE as compared to SO, THUS, and THEREFORE.

READ: find the differences between the two models below.

<u>Unified report #1</u>:

American universities have a rural tradition. America was once a rural nation; thus, it is natural that its colleges and universities

began in the country near small villages. Also, land was cheap in the country, so it was less expensive to build schools there than in the city. Too, the country people thought that cities were a bad influence; therefore, they wanted their children to go to universities located in the country.

Unified report #2:

American universities have a rural tradition. Since America was once a rural nation, it is natural that its colleges and universities began in the country near small villages. Also, it was less expensive to build schools there than in the city because land was cheap in the country. Too, the country people wanted their children to go to universities located in the country, for they thought that cities were a bad influence.

ANALYZE: read the section below. Then answer the questions.

Sentences which have cause-effect relationships are very common in English. SO, THUS, and THEREFORE are only a few of the many words and phrases which can be used to connect sentences having a cause-effect relationship. In order for your writing to have variety, you need to know how to use some of these connectors. This lesson shows you how to use FOR, BECAUSE, and SINCE. Although these three words also connect cause-effect sentences, they do it in an entirely different way from SO, THUS, and THEREFORE.

1. Do FOR, BECAUSE, and SINCE occur in C sentences or E sentences?
2. FOR is identical grammatically to SO: that is, it occurs at the beginning of the second of the two sentences it connects, and is usually preceded by a comma. In what way is FOR different from SO?
3. BECAUSE and SINCE can occur at the beginning of the first or the second of the two sentences they connect. What is the difference in punctuation when BECAUSE or SINCE occur in the first sentence and when they occur in the second? (See the model report.)
4. In the sentences below, FOR, BECAUSE, and SINCE are used incorrectly. Either the grammar (punctuation, position) or the meaning is wrong. Rewrite each sentence correctly.
    a. Because she had to get a loaf of bread Mary was going to the supermarket.
    b. Mr. Ching can't buy his goods in large quantities because he has to pay more for them than the big supermarkets do.
    c. For Mr. Ching is so friendly; Bill likes going there.
    d. Since Don wants to go to San Francisco, he has seen so many beautiful pictures of it.
    e. Bill might take history, since it is supposed to be a good course.
    f. Bill kept looking at his watch for he had to get back and do his work.
5. See the final sentence in each of the models at the beginning of the lesson. In the first model the C occurs first, and the E second. In the second model the E is first and the C second. In

both models THE COUNTRY PEOPLE occurs in the first part of the sentence, and THEY occurs in the second part. Can you think of a reason for this?

6. Change the following sentence, which is in C-E order, to E-C order. Be sure to change the position of the noun phrase and pronoun at the same time. BECAUSE RURAL UNIVERSITIES ARE OLDER AND MORE FAMOUS THAN URBAN ONES, AMERICANS TEND TO BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE BETTER.

WRITE: rewrite the unified report you did for Lesson 9. This time use FOR, BECAUSE, or SINCE instead of SO, THUS, or THEREFORE. Be sure to make all of the necessary changes in punctuation, etc.